

Seasonal Fish Mortalities

During the late spring and early summer months, it is not uncommon to witness dead or dying fish in ponds and lakes across the state. Often it is presumed that fish kills are caused by the negligence of some person, industry or community. However, many, if not most, such incidents stem from natural causes. Among these causes are: so-called winter kill, brought about by a depletion of oxygen supplies coincident with heavy snow and ice cover; stress (brought about by these low oxygen levels); periods of unusually rapid temperature increase; lake inversions and natural stresses associated with spawning.

The deaths, while unsettling, may be viewed as nature's way of reducing the fish population, selecting those fish which are most fit for survival and providing the most favorable conditions for the growth of the survivors.

If you suspect a fish kill is caused by non-natural causes, please call your nearest DNR location (see page 31) or Michigan's Pollution Emergency Alert System (800) 292-4706.